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ABSTRACT

In 1992, a survey was conducted of employers of former students at Pima Community College (PCC), in Arizona, to assess graduates' on-the-job performance and provide data for program review. Questionnaires were mailed to 125 supervisors of 1991-92 PCC graduates who had given permission for their supervisors to be contacted, asking the employers to rate their employees as good, very good, or excellent in the areas of reading comprehension, mathematical computation, written and oral communication, critical thinking, decision-making, computer skills, local and world history, people skills, work independence, punctuality, timely task completion, work quality, bilingual skills, teamwork, and overall performance. Study findings, based on responses from 91 employers, included the following: (1) 26% of the respondents were supervisors of graduates from registered nursing, 16% from business administration, 14% from practical nursing, and 10% from the nursing assistant program; (2) 93% of the graduates were employed in jobs that were either directly related or somewhat related to their training at PCC; (3) overall, both general education-related knowledge and abilities and work-related abilities were rated as very good, while work knowledge skills were rated somewhat higher than general education skills; and (4) respondents who supervised nursing graduates recommended that PCC provide more training in specific skills areas and more hand-on training, such as practicums and clinical internships. Tables and recommendations are included. (KP)

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1992 Employer Assessments of Recent Pima Community College Graduates

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December 1993

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1992 Employer Assessments of Recent Pima Community College Graduates

Executive Summary

The Institutional Research Office of Pima Community College (PCC) surveyed Pima County employers in Fall 1992 to assess the on-the-job performance of recent PCC graduates from selected instructional programs. The survey was designed to provide useful information for Program and Services Review, and Occupational Education evaluation, as well as other efforts to improve instructional programs. Results from the 91 respondents showed that:

1. Overall, recent graduates of selected PCC programs are performing adeptly in the work place, based upon their supervisors' assessments. Additionally, more than 90% of the graduates included in this study were employed in jobs that are either directly related or somewhat related to their training at PCC. Thus, PCC appears to be doing a good job of preparing graduates for employment in selected fields of study, if these findings are representative of all graduates in the sampled programs.

2. The graduates' performances were rated as "very good" (4 on a 5-point scale) in most of the areas assessed. However, their work knowledge and skills were rated somewhat higher than were their general education knowledge and abilities. This latter finding corresponds to the importance placed on both of these areas by employers, as reported in another study[1]. Therefore, it would seem to indicate that the graduates' performance relates favorably to employer expectations.

3. Respondents who supervise nursing graduates recommended that PCC can better meet their needs through providing more training in specific skill areas and more hands-on training, such as practicums and clinical internships. Thus, College faculty and campus administrators may want to consider this suggestion when revising program curricula.

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[1] 1992 Employer Needs Assessment Results for Pima County Employers

Pima Community College

1992 Employer Assessments of Recent Pima Community College Graduates

The Institutional Research Office of Pima Community College (PCC) surveyed Pima County employers in Fall 1992 to assess the on-the-job performance of PCC graduates. The survey was designed to provide useful information for Program and Services Review, Occupational Education evaluation, and other efforts to improve instructional programs.

Method

Researchers from the Institutional Research Office developed an employer survey questionnaire with assistance from PCC administrators, faculty, and staff. This draft questionnaire was piloted with a small sample of Pima County employers, and modifications were made to the survey based upon comments from respondents. The revised questionnaire (Appendix) was mailed to the supervisors of 125 1991-92 PCC graduates who had given permission for their supervisors to be contacted. In order to protect their privacy, only graduates granting permission to be evaluated were included in the study.

This study primarily targeted graduates of programs undergoing Program and Services review, although graduates from some other programs were included. Researchers also designed the current study to complement a separate, concurrently conducted Employer Needs Assessment survey[1] designed to gather information about employer training and employment needs.

Descriptive statistics were calculated for quantitative data, and analysis of variance was used to compare average ratings among subgroups. Comments were categorized.

Results

Researchers received completed questionnaires from 91 (73%) of the surveyed supervisors. This response rate is adequate to generalize the

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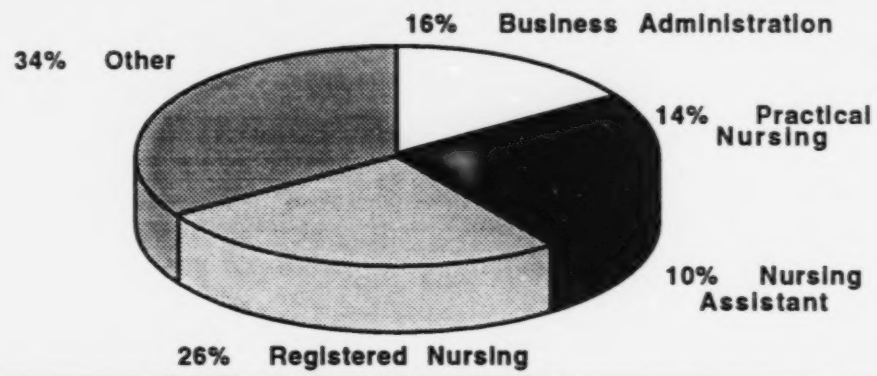
[1]1992 Employer Needs Assessment Results for Pima County Employers

results provided by the respondents to all of those surveyed. However, because only graduates giving permission to be assessed were included in the study, the results may not reflect the performance of those who did not give permission. In addition, the results may be generalized only to those programs selected for inclusion in the study.

Graph 1 depicts a breakdown of respondents by Standard Industrial Classification. It shows that the largest proportion of respondents were supervisors of graduates from registered nursing (26%), followed by business administration (16%), and practical nursing (14%). Respondents in the "other" category included supervisors of graduates from programs such as engineering, banking, secretarial training, dental assisting, and general studies. However, there were not enough respondents in these areas to list the results for each of these groups separately.

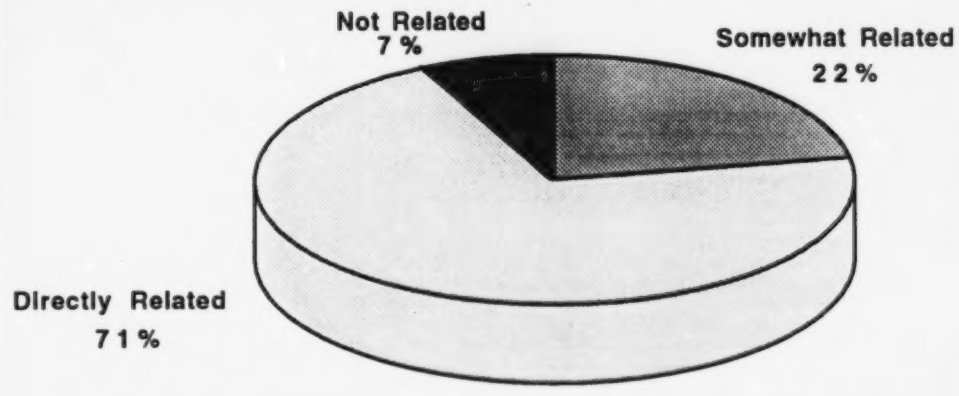
Graph 1. Percent of 1992 Pima County Employer Survey Respondents by Standard Industrical Classification



Graduates included in this study were relatively new to their jobs, which is understandable since they were recent PCC graduates. Typically, they had worked for their employer for about 14 months, including six months in their current position.

The vast majority (93%) of the graduates were employed in jobs that were related to their PCC training (Graph 2). Seventy-one percent had jobs that were directly related to their training and 22% were employed in jobs that were somewhat related. The remaining 7% held jobs that were not related to their PCC training.

Graph 2. Relatedness of Graduates' PCC Training to Current Job



The main part of the survey asked the respondents to rate the performance of the graduates' general education knowledge or abilities and work knowledge or skills. Table 1 summarizes these findings by degree or certificate area. Graphs 3 and 4 also depict these results for respondents as a whole. They show that the respondents rated the graduates' overall performance as "very good" (4 on a 5-point).

Among the general education knowledge and abilities, the respondents rated the graduates' (1) reading comprehension, (2) oral communication, (3) written communication, (4) math computation, (5) critical thinking/problem solving, and (6) decision making as "very good," on average (Table 1 and Graph 3). In addition, they rated the graduates' word processing computer skills and knowledge of southwest culture/history and world history/culture as "good" (3 on a 5-point scale). However, these latter lower ratings may reflect limited opportunity for the graduates to demonstrate these skills and knowledge rather than lower performance.

Table 1 and Graph 4 display the results of the graduates' work knowledge/skills performance ratings. On average, the majority of the ratings, including (1) punctuality, (2) working as a team member, (3) ability to learn new skills, (4) following directions, (5) quality of work, (6) completing tasks in a timely manner, (7) working independently, (8) applying knowledge and skills, and (9) interpersonal/people skills, fell within the "very good" category. Using verbal and written bilingual skills were rated as "good."

Table 1. Average Employer Ratings of PCC Graduates' Work Performance by Degree/Certificate Area

Knowledge/Skill Area	Degree/Certificate Area						Total
	Business Admin.	Nursing			Total Nursing	Other	
		Assistant	Practical	Registered			
General Education Knowledge/Abilities							
Reading Comprehension	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG
Mathematical Computation	VG	G	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG
Written Communication	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG
Oral Communication	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG
Critical Thinking/Prob. Solving	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG
Decision Making	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG
Computer Skills (Wordprocessing)	VG	*	G	G	G	VG	G
Southwest Culture/History	G	*	*	G	G	G	G
World History/Culture	G	*	*	G	G	G	G
Subtotal	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG
Work Knowledge/Skills							
Interpersonal/People Skills	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG
Work Independently	VG	VG	VG	G	VG	VG	VG
Applying Knowledge/Skills	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG
Punctuality	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG
Timely Task Completion	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG
Quality of Work	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG
Following Directions		VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG
Written Bilingual Skills	*	*	*	*	VG	G	G
Verbal Bilingual Skills	*	*	*	*	G	G	G
Ability to Learn New Skills	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG
Working as a Team Member	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG
Overall Performance	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG
Subtotal	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG

*Insufficient data

Legend	
G	Good
VG	Very Good
	Excellent

The average performance ratings for general education knowledge and abilities (Graph 5) and work knowledge and skills (Graph 6) as a whole are depicted by degree or certificate area. There were no statistically significant differences among the degree or certificate area groups' average ratings, all of which fell within the "very good" range. However, the supervisors rated the graduates' overall work knowledge/skills performance somewhat higher than their general education knowledge/abilities.

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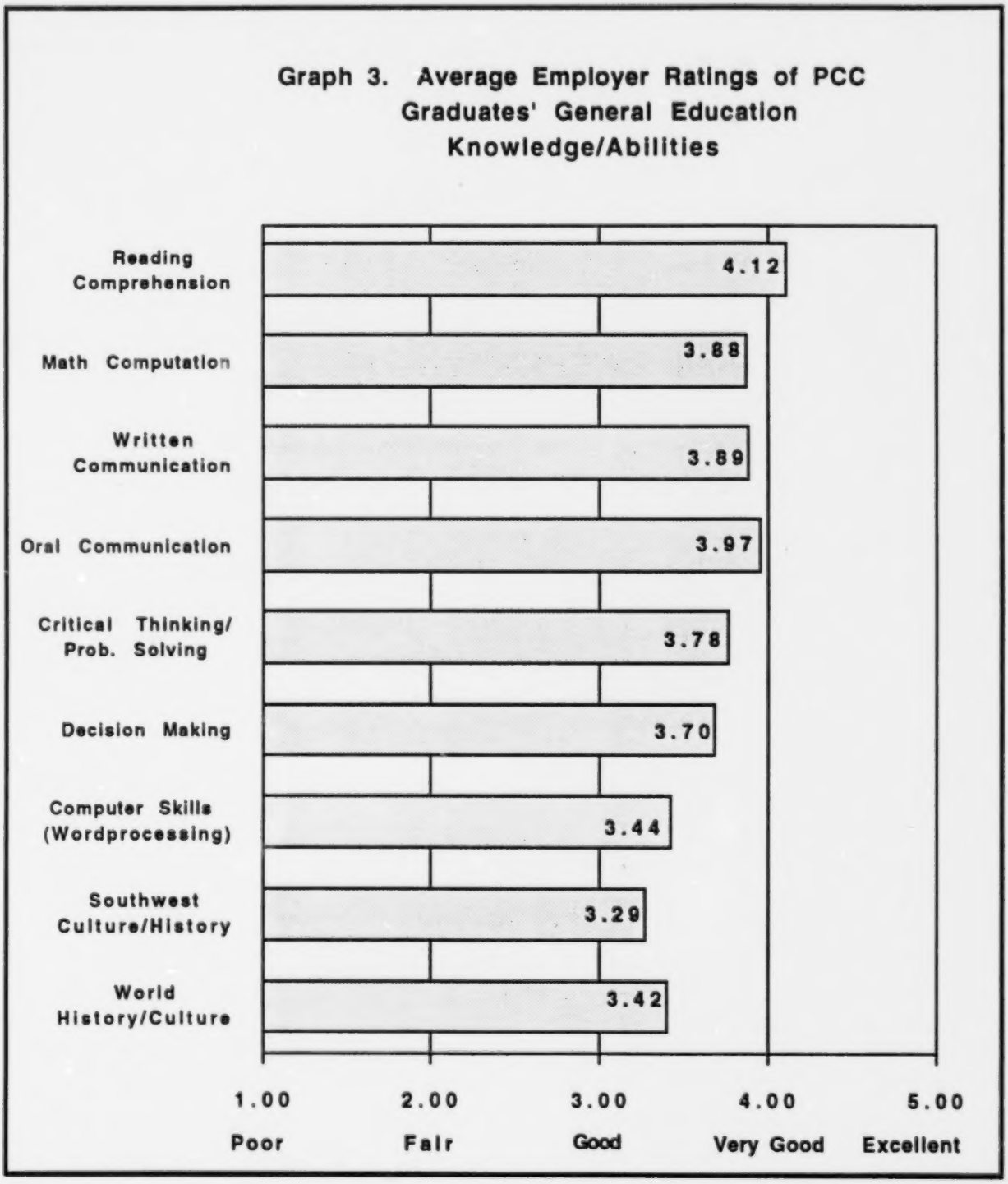
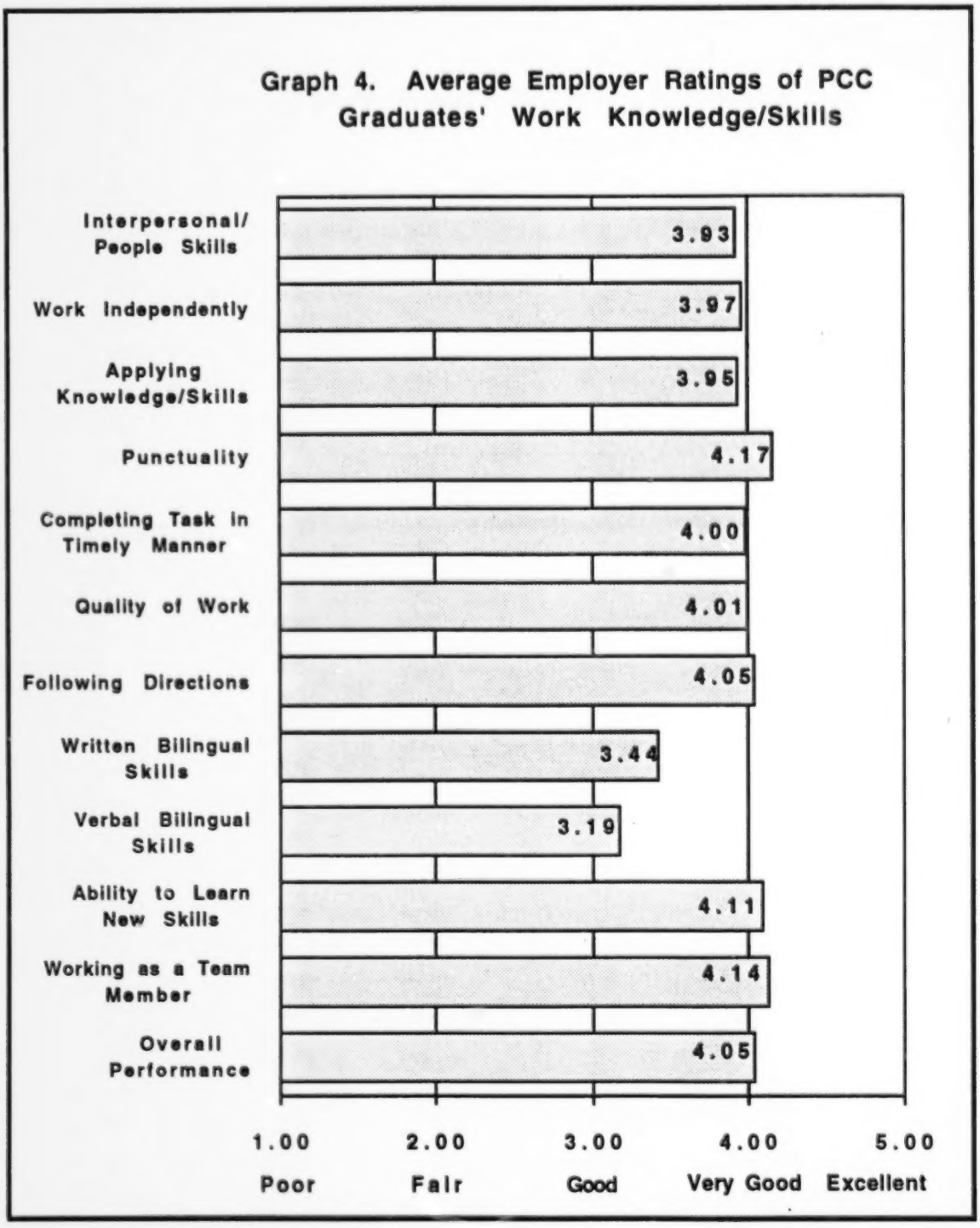
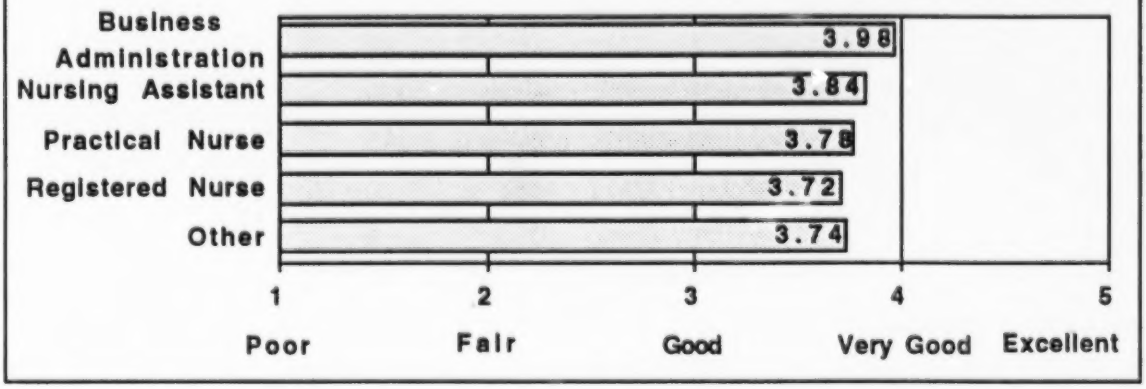

Graph 3. Average Employer Ratings of PCC Graduates' General Education Knowledge/Abilities
Reading Comprehension
4.12
Math Computation
3.88
Written Communication
3.89
Oral Communication
3.97
Critical Thinking/ Prob. Solving
3.78
Decision Making
3.70
Computer Skills (Wordprocessing)
3.44
Southwest Culture/History
3.29
World History/Culture
3.42
1.00 Poor
2.00 Fair
3.00 Good
4.00 Very Good
5.00 Excellent



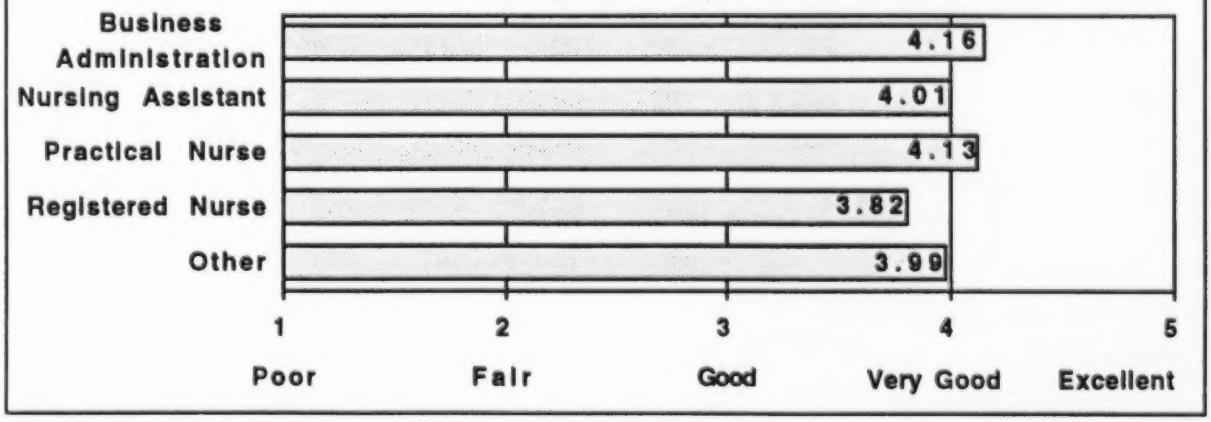
Respondents were also asked to rate the importance of each of the previously referenced knowledge and skill areas and academic credentials

to the graduates' jobs. However, because similar results using a more representative sample are summarized in the Employer Needs Assessment report[1], the findings from the current study will not be described in this report.

Graph 5. Average Employer Performance Rating of PCC Graduates' Overall General Education Knowledge/Abilities by Degree/Certificate Area



Graph 6. Average Employer Performance Rating of PCC Graduates' Overall Work Knowledge/Skills by Degree/Certificate Area



Results from the Employer Needs Assessment study[1] showed that those knowledge and skill areas rated as being very important included:

[1]1992 Employer Needs Assessment Results for Pima County Employers

(1) quality of employees' work, (2) having a positive attitude toward work, (3) following directions, (4) working as a member of a team, (5) oral communication, (6) completing tasks in a timely manner (7) punctuality, and (8) applying knowledge/skills. Additionally, respondents rated possessing a technical certificate as being slightly important, and having an associate degree or bachelor's degree as slightly unimportant. The reader is invited to refer to this report[1] for more detailed information.

Table 2 summarizes suggestions describing how PCC can better prepare graduates to meet the needs of Pima County employers. The

Table 2. How PCC Can Better Prepare Students to Meet Employer Needs by Degree/Certificate Area

Comment	Degree/Certificate Area										Total	
	Business Admin.		Nursing						Other			
			Assistant		Practical		Registered					
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Specific skills/courses	0	0%	2	29%	1	17%	3	17%	1	13%	7	17%
More hands-on experience-practicum, clincal time	0	0%	1	14%	4	66%	1	6%	0	0%	6	15%
Better communication skills	1	33%	1	14%	0	0%	2	12%	0	0%	4	10%
More critical thinking	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	12%	1	0%	3	7%
More organizational skills	0	0%	1	14%	0	0%	2	12%	0	0%	3	7%
More opportunities to work as a team member	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	12%	0	0%	2	5%
Bilingual skills	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	12%	0	0%	2	5%
Other	2	67%	2	29%	1	17%	3	17%	6	74%	14	34%
Total	3	100%	7	100%	6	100%	17	100%	8	100%	41	100%

largest proportion of responses (17%) indicated a need to offer specific courses and training in specific skill areas. Other responses included providing graduates more hands-on experiences (nursing graduates only), such as practicums and clinical experiences (15%), and training graduates to have better communication skills (10%). These responses parallel those obtained using a similar question on the Employer Needs Assessment survey[1].

[1]1992 Employer Needs Assessment Results for Pima County Employers

Lastly, Table 3 lists the respondents' general comments. The majority of these comments were positive remarks about the graduates or PCC. Observations such as "this employee is exceptional" and "if [this employee] is typical of your students, send me more" were representative.

Table 3. Other Comments by Degree/Certificate Area

	Degree/Certificate Area											
	Business Admin.		Nursing						Other		Total	
			Assistant		Practical		Registered					
Comment	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Employee doing excellent work, has good skills	1	33%	1	50%	3	100%	4	57%	3	75%	12	63%
Employee too new to evaluate	1	33%	0	0%	0	0%	1	14%	0	0%	2	11%
PCC should keep up good work	1	34%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	25%	2	11%
Other	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%	2	29%	0	0%	3	15%
Total	3	100%	2	100%	3	100%	7	100%	4	100%	19	100%

Conclusions and Recommendations

The following conclusions and recommendations are offered based upon the results of this study:

1. Recent graduates of selected PCC programs are performing adeptly in the work place, based upon their supervisors' assessments. Thus, PCC appears to be doing a good job of preparing graduates for employment in specified areas. However, these results must be tempered by the fact that only those graduates giving permission for their supervisors to be contacted were included in the study. It's possible that the job performance of graduates not giving permission would be rated lower.

2. More than 90% of the graduates included in this study were employed in jobs that are either directly related or somewhat related to their training at PCC. If this finding is representative of graduates in the sampled programs, then the College is doing a very good job of preparing students for jobs in these selected fields of study. However, again, it's possible that a higher proportion of graduates working outside of their field of study chose not to participate in this study. In addition, nursing

graduates, who comprised 50% of those in the study, may not be typical of other graduates.

3. Because the current study targets graduates from a limited number of programs, it is recommended that future studies sample graduates from a broader variety of programs to insure that PCC graduates' performance levels are uniformly high across programs.

4. Since the majority of graduates included in this study had not been employed in their current position long, it would useful to survey their supervisors again at a later date to determine if the graduates' performance levels increase, decrease, or stay the same. It's possible that the performance of relatively new employees may not be representative of those who have been employed longer.

5. The finding that the graduates' work knowledge and skills were rated somewhat higher than their general education knowledge and abilities corresponds to the importance placed upon both of these areas by employers, as reported in another study[1]. This would seem to indicate that the graduates' performance relates favorably to employer expectations.

6. Respondents who supervise nursing graduates recommended that PCC can better meet their needs through providing more training in specific skill areas and hands-on training, such as practicums and clinical internships. These results are consistent with those from the Employer Needs Assessment[1]. Thus, College faculty and campus administrators may want to consider this suggestion when revising program curricula.

7. It is recommended that a future study relate graduates' job performance with their academic performance at PCC. Results of such a study might enable researchers to predict future job performance from PCC students' academic achievement. This information could be used, in turn, to advise students and provide additional support for selected students.

8. Overall, PCC appears to be doing a good job of preparing students in selected programs for employment.

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[1]1992 Employer Needs Assessment Results for Pima County Employers

Appendix

Pima Community College - 1992 Employer Survey

Directions: Please take a few minutes to respond to the following questions about the Pima Community College graduate/completer listed below. This person has given us permission to contact you. The information you provide will remain **confidential** and will only be used in summary form. Feel free to contact David Scott at 884-6934 if you have any questions. Please change any incorrect information below and return your completed questionnaire in the enclosed envelope to the Institutional Research Office, Pima Community College, 200 N. Stone Ave., Tucson, AZ 85702 by **Friday, September 25th.** Thank You.

Employee Name: _____ Employee's PCC Major: _____

Employee Position: _____ Supervisor: _____

Employer: _____ Phone: _____

Employer Address: _____

A. How long has this employee been employed? (1) in this position _____ (2) with this employer _____

B. To what extent is this employee's training/major at PCC (listed above) related to his or her current position?

_____ Directly Related _____ Somewhat Related

_____ Not Related _____ Don't Know

C. Please indicate the importance of each of the following credentials when hiring employees for the position listed above.

	Very Important	*Important*	*Slightly Important*	*Slightly Unimportant*	*Unimportant*	*Very Unimportant*	*Don't Know/ No Opinion*
1. **Basic Certificate** (approximately 6 months of training)							
2. **Technical or Advanced Certificate** (approximately 1 year of training)							
3. **Associate Degree** (approximately 2 years of training)							

☐ Please check this box if you would like a copy of the survey results.

Please continue on the other side...

D. Please rate this employee's performance by circling the appropriate response on the **Performance** rating scale. Also, rate the importance of each specified item for his/her job by circling the appropriate response on the **Importance** rating scale.

	Performance						Importance						
	Excellent	*Very Good*	*Good*	*Fair*	*Poor*	*Not applicable/ Not observed*	*Very Important*	*Important*	*Slightly Important*	*Slightly Unimportant*	*Unimportant*	*Very Unimportant*	*Don't Know/ No Opinion*
General Education Knowledge/Abilities													
1. Reading comprehension	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
2. Mathematical computation	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
3. Written Communication	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
4. Oral communication	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
5. Critical thinking/problem solving	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
6. Decision making	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
7. Computer skills, such as wordprocessing	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
8. Southwest culture/history	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
9. World history/culture	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
10. Other (please specify) _____	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
Work Knowledge/Skill													
11. Interpersonal/people skills	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
12. Ability to work independently	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
13. Applying knowledge/skills related to job	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
14. Punctuality	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
15. Completing tasks in a timely manner	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
16. Quality of work	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
17. Following directions	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
18. Using written bilingual skills	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
19. Using verbal bilingual skills	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
20. Ability to learn new skills	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
21. Working as a member of a team	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
22. Overall performance	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK
23. Other (please specify) _____	E	VG	G	F	P	NA	VI	I	SI	SU	U	VU	DK

E. How can Pima Community College better prepare students to meet your employment needs? _____

_____

_____

F. Other comments: _____